

## Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 NEAE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00  
USIE-00 INRE-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03  
NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 TRSE-00  
MC-02 /064 W

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FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1180

INFO SECDEF PRIORITY

AMCONSUL LAHORE PRIORITY

AMCONSUL KARACHI PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY DACCA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY KABUL PRIORITY

CINCPAC

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ISLAMABAD 4140

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PK, PINT, MPOL

SUBJECT: THOUGHTS ON AN ARMY TAKEOVER

SUMMARY: THE ARMY PLAYS A LEADING ROLE IN THE PAKISTAN  
POLITICAL DRAMA, AND WE HAVE CONSEQUENTLY CONSIDERED THE  
QUESTION IF THE ARMY DID TAKE OVER HOW LONG WOULD IT REMAIN  
IN POWER. WHAT COMES AFTER THE MILITARY MOVES - IF IT DOES  
DO SO - DEPENDS IN PART ON BOTH THE MODALITIES OF ITS  
INVOLVEMENT AND JUST WHEN IT MOVES.

ALTHOUGH WE HAVE NO REASON TO BELIEVE THE ARMY IS  
PLANNING TO MOVE AGAINST THE PM IMMINENTLY, IF THE END  
OF THE POLITICAL DRAMA INCLUDES AN EVENTUAL MILITARY  
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TAKE-OVER, THERE ARE SEVERAL POSSIBILITIES FOR HOW LONG  
THE ARMY WILL REMAIN IN POWER. IT CAN CHOOSE TO STAY  
ONLY FOR THE MINIMUM TIME NECESSARY TO ARRANGE NEW  
ELECTIONS. IT CAN DECIDE ON A MID-TERM OPTION WHICH  
WOULD INVOLVE THE MILITARY FIRST RETURNING THE COUNTRY  
TO NORMALCY AND THEN SCHEDULING ELECTIONS. FINALLY,  
INDEFINITE MILITARY RULE A LA AYUB KHAN IS POSSIBLE.

WE BELIEVE IF THE MILITARY DOES MOVE, IT WILL REMAIN IN POWER FOR A LIMITED PERIOD OF TIME ONLY.

THE SITUATION IS CONSIDERABLY CHANGED FROM 1958. THE MILITARY IS MUCH MORE HESITANT TO BECOME INVOLVED IN POLITICS AND IT DOES NOT NOW HAVE A MAN ON HORSEBACK. THERE IS NO POPULAR SUPPORT FOR THE MILITARY TO TAKE OVER INDEFINITELY AS THERE WAS IN 1958. ALSO, TODAY THERE IS AN ALTERNATIVE POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AVAILABLE AND ACCEPTABLE TO THE NATION, AND THE OPPOSITION WOULD DO ALL IT COULD TO ENSURE THE MILITARY TENURE WAS AS SHORT AS POSSIBLE. WE CANNOT IGNORE THE POSSIBILITY THAT ONCE THE MILITARY IS INSTALLED IT WILL TASTE THE FRUITS OF POWER AND BE HESITANT TO LEAVE. ON BALANCE, HOWEVER, ALTHOUGH WE CANNOT IGNORE THE POSSIBILITY OF INDEFINITE MILITARY RULE, WE BELIEVE THE REASONS ARGUING FOR A LIMITED MILITARY TENURE ARE STRONGER. END SUMMARY

1. THE ARMY CONTINUES TO PLAY A RELUCTANT LEADING ROLE IN THE PAKISTAN POLITICAL DRAMA. WITH MARTIAL LAW IMPOSED IN KARACHI, LAHORE AND HYDERABAD, THE MILITARY FINDS ITSELF EVEN FURTHER ENTANGLED IN A POLITICAL SITUATION IT WOULD PREFER TO AVOID. (WE HAVE USED THE TERMS "MILITARY" AND "ARMY" INTERCHANGEABLY, CONSIDERING THE PREDOMINANCE OF THE SENIOR SERVICE.) AS WE CONSIDER THE POSSIBLE SCENARIOS THAT COULD LEAD TO A RESOLUTION OF THE CONFLICT, MOST OF THEM HAVE THE MILITARY AS AN IMPORTANT COMPONENT. AN ARMY TAKE-OVER OF THE COUNTRY IS CERTAINLY POSSIBLE. WE HAVE CONSEQUENTLY CONSIDERED THE QUESTION IF THE ARMY DID TAKE OVER HOW LONG

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WOULD IT REMAIN IN POWER BEFORE RETURNING THE COUNTRY TO SOME SEMBLANCE OF CIVILIAN RULE.

2. WHAT COMES AFTER THE MILITARY MOVES DEPENDS IN PART ON THE MODALITIES OF ITS INVOLVEMENT. IF THE MILITARY CAN LIMIT ITS PARTICIPATION, FOR EXAMPLE, TO SUPPORTING THE PRESIDENT IN THE IMPOSITION OF PRESIDENT'S RULE AND HOLDING NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS, DE JURE MILITARY RULE PENDING THE FORMATION OF A NEW GOVERNMENT CAN BE AVOIDED. HOWEVER, IF A MILITARY TAKE-OVER TAKES THE FORM OF COMPLETE CONTROL OF THE NATION'S ADMINISTRATIVE AND LEGAL STRUCTURES WITH COUNTRY-WIDE MARTIAL LAW AND AN ARMY OFFICER AS CHIEF MARTIAL LAW ADMINISTRATOR, A DIFFERENT SCENARIO WOULD UNFOLD.

3. THE LENGTH OF MILITARY RULE WOULD ALSO DEPEND IN PART ON JUST WHEN THE ARMY MOVES. IF THERE IS STILL HOPE THAT AN ALTERNATIVE POLITICAL SOLUTION MIGHT BE FOUND, THERE WOULD BE LESS POPULAR SUPPORT FOR ARMY ACTION THAN IF THE

MILITARY WAITS UNTIL THERE IS NO OTHER CHOICE TO KEEP THE COUNTRY FROM COMPLETE CHAOS. WE HAVE ASSUMED THAT THE MILITARY DOES NOT WANT AND WILL NOT MOVE TO ASSUME COMPLETELY THE REINS OF POWER UNTIL THE LAST POSSIBLE MOMENT. IN SUCH A SITUATION, WE BELIEVE THE MILITARY WOULD ASSUME COMPLETE CONTROL, UNDER MARTIAL LAW, WITH BOTH DE FACTO AND DE JURE ULTIMATE POWERS.

4. IF THE PRESENT DRAMA ENDS WITH FULL MILITARY CONTROL OF THE COUNTRY AND BHUTTO OUT OF POWER, THERE ARE SEVERAL POSSIBILITIES FOR THE LENGTH OF TIME THE ARMY WILL REMAIN IN POWER. IT CAN CHOOSE TO STAY FOR THE MINIMUM AMOUNT OF TIME - ONLY AS LONG AS NECESSARY TO ARRANGE PROMPT NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS. WE BELIEVE THE SHORTEST THEORETICAL MILITARY INCUMBENCY WOULD BEHUT TWO MONTHS. INCLUDING THE TIMEO NECESSARY TO ADMINISTRATIVELY ARRANGE FOR ELECTIONS AND A  
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REASONABLE CAMPAIGN PERIOD, THIS SHORT TERM OPTION MAY INVOLVE MILITARY RULE FOR A SOMEWHAT LONGER TIME, PERHAPS UP TO FOUR MONTHS. A SECOND POSSIBILITY IS FOR THE MILITARY NOT TO ANNOUNCE IMMEDIATE ELECTIONS, AND INSTEAD FIRST CONVKUHRATE ON ENSURING PUBLIC SECURITY AND SAFETY, RESUMING ESSENTIAL SERVICES, AND IMPLEMENTING OTHER BASIC STEPS TO RETURN THE NATPTN TO A SEMBLANCE OF NORMALCY. THIS WOULD BE THE MID-TERM OPTION, AND WOULD INVOLVE THE MILITARY IN CONTROL FOR AS MUCH AS NINE TO TEN MONTHS BEFORE THEY ANNOUNCE A DEFINITE SCHEDULE FOR NEW ELECTIONS.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 ISLAMABAD 4140

5. A FINAL POSSIBILITY IS MILITARY RULE FOR AN INDEFINITE DURATION, A LA AYUB KHAN. UNDER THIS OPTION, THE MILITARY WOULD DECIDE, AND THE PUBLIC WOULD ACQUIESCE IN THE DECISION, THAT THE ONLY WAY TO AVOID FURTHER DISORDER, INEFFICIENCIES AND CORRUPTION, IS TO HAVE MILITARY RULE. AFTER STABILITY AND NATIONAL SECURITY ARE ENSURED, AFTER THE BUREAUCRACY IS CLEANSED OF CORRUPT ELEMENTS AND MADE RESPONSIVE TO THE PUBLIC, AFTER THE NATION'S ADMINISTRATIVE MACHINERY IS RUNNING SMOOTHLY, ONLY THEN WOULD CONSIDERATION BE GIVEN TO TURNING POWER BACK TO THE CIVILIANS.

6. WE BELIEVE IF THE MILITARY DOES TAKE OVER IT WILL BE FAR A LIMITED PERIOD OF TIME AND THE ARMY WILL WANT TO AVOID CHOOSING THE INDEFINITE OPTION, UNLIKE 1958. THE SITUATION TODAY IS CONSIDERABLY CHANGED AND MOST OF THE DIFFERENCES ARGUE FOR ONLY A LIMITED PERIOD OF MILITARY RULE. PERHAPS THE MOST IMPORTANT  
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DIFFERENCES IS THAT TODAY'S MILITARY IS CHARY OF POLITICAL INVOLVEMENT AND DOES NOT SEE ITS INTERESTS SERVED BY PROLONGED MILITARY RULE. THE MILITARY LEARNED ITS LESSONS WELL AND KNOWS THAT THE APPROBATION WHICH GREETED AYUB KHAN'S TAKE-OVER IN 1958 TURNED TO SCORN AND MISTRUST WITHIN TEN YEARS. THE ARMY IS JUST BEGINNING TO REGAIN ITS FORMER POSITION OF ESTEEM AND RESPECT IN THE NATIONAL CONSCIOUSNESS FOLLOWING THE LAST YEARS OF AYUB, THE DEBACLE OF YAHYA KHAN'S RULE AND THE FALL OF DACCA; ITS LEADERS ARE WISE ENOUGH NOT TO WANT TO REPEAT THE MISTAKES OF THE PAST.

7. ALSO, THE PUBLIC ATTITUDE TODAY IS MARKEDLY DIFFERENT FROM WHAT IT WAS IN 1958. BEFORE AYUB, ONE OFTEN HEARD THE COMMENT THAT THE ARMY SHOULD TAKE OVER AND RULE AND THROW OUT THE CORRUPT POLITICIANS. WE DO NOT HEAR SIMILAR SENTIMENTS VOICED TODAY. AT THE MOST, PEOPLE WILL SAY THEY HOPE THE ARMY THROWS OUT BHUTTO; THEY DO NOT SAY THEY WANT THE ARMY TO REMAIN IN POWER THEREAFTER. THE NATION REALIZED DURING AYUB AND YAHYA THAT THE ARMY WAS NOT THE PANACEA FOR ITS ILLS AND DOES NOT WANT

A REPETITION OF THOSE YEARS.

8. UNLIKE 1958, THERE IS AN ALTERNATIVE LEADERSHIP AVAILABLE AND ACCEPTABLE TO THE PUBLIC. IN THE LATE 50S, ALL THE POLITICIANS HAD BEEN DISCREDITED AND THERE WAS NO POLITICAL FIGURE WHO WAS SEEN AS A RESPECTED AND POPULAR NATIONAL LEADER. TODAY, EVEN THOUGH THE OPPOSITION IS COMPOSED OF DISPARATE GROUPS, THERE ARE INDIVIDUALS, MOST NOTABLY ASGHAR KHAN, WHO CAN BE SEEN AS NATIONAL LEADERS AND WHO CAN OFFER AN ALTERNATIVE TO TO A MILITARY RULER.

9. THE OPPOSITION HAS A SUBSTANTIAL NUMBER OF ACTIVE SUPPORTERS WHO WANT TO SEE BHUTTO OUR, BUT ALSO WANT TO SEE ONE OF THEIR OWN INSTALLED IN THE PRIME MINISTERSHIP. IF THE MILITARY ATTEMPTED TO RULE FOR ANY LENGTH OF TIME, THEY WOULD FACE THE GROWING ANGER AND FRUSTRATION OF THE PNA SUPPORTERS WHO ARE TODAY MARCHING TO FORCE BHUTTO FROM OFFICE BUT WHO WANT TO SEE CONFIDENTIAL

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THE NEXT STEP IN THEIR PLAN IMPLEMENTED-SOME FORM OF PNA GOVERNMENT.

10. FINALLY, THE MILITARY CANNOT NOW OFFER A MAN ON HORSEBACK AS IT DID IN 1958. AYUBHJAS SEEN AS THE MILITARY HERO, THE INCORRUPTIBLE MAN OF STRENGTH WHO COULD UNSELFISHLY SAVE THE NATION. TODAY'S MILITARY LEADERS, IN COMPARISON, ARE A COLORLESS LOT. THE LACK OF A CHARISMATIC LEADER IN THE MILITARY IS BY DESIGN - BHUTTO HAS BEEN CAREFUL IN HIS SELECTION OF CHIEFS TO AVOID JUST SUCH A POSSIBILITY - AND BY CHOICE OF THE MILITARY LEAKERS THEMSELVES WHO SEE THEIR ROLE IN A STRIVELY MILITARY, NOT A POLITICAL, SENSE.

11. WE CANNOT IGNORE THE POSSIBILITY THAT ONCE A MILITARY GOVERNMENT IS INSTALLED, AND IT TASTES THE FRUITS OF POWER, THAT IT WILL ATTEMPT TO EXTEND ITS TENURE AS LONG AS POSSIBLE. MANY PAKISTANIS STILL SPEAK FAVORABLY OF AYUB - THEIR VIEWS MADE MORE MELLOW AND LESS CRITICAL WITH THE PASSAGE OF TIME - AND REMINISCE ABOUT HOW CHEAP BASIC FOODSTUFFS AND OTHER ESSENTIALS WERE DURING THE AYUB ERA, AND HOW CORRUPTION WAS REDUCED WHEN HE FIRST CAME TO POWER. ACCORDING TO THIS SCENARIO, THERE WOULD BE SUCH GENERAL RELIEF AT HAVING THE CRISIS END AND THE COUNTRY RETURN TO NORMAL, AND APPRECIATION FOR EFFICIENCIES INTRODUCED BY THE MILITARY, THE GENERAL SATISFACTION WOULD OUTWEIGH ANY POPULAR DISCONTENT WITH MILITARY RULE.

12. ON BALANCE, WE BELIEVE THAT ALTHOUGH WE CANNOT IGNORE THE POSSIBILITY OF INDEFINITE MILITARY CONTROL IF THE ARMY DOES MOVE AGAINST THE PRIME MINISTER, THE REASONS ARGUING FOR A SHORTER ARMY TENURE ARE STRONGER. WE CONSEQUENTLY FORESEE THAT ANY MILITARY RULE IN PAKISTAN WOULD PROBABLY BE OF LIMITED

DURATION AND ITS PRIMARY PURPOSE WOULD BE TO SMOOTH THE WAY FOR  
AN EXPEDITIOUS RETURN TO CIVILIAN GOVERNMENT.  
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## Message Attributes

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